

Member Login | Help

About Us	Membership	Events	Publications	Careers	Community	Media Kit	News	Contact AWRA	Home
----------	------------	--------	--------------	---------	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	------

Member Login

Login:

Pass:

Can't Remember Your Password? [Reset it](#)

PUBLICATIONS

JAWRA

Subscribe

About JAWRA

Latest Issue Highlights

News

Editors

JAWRA Online

Become a Reviewer

Table of Contents

Purchase Articles

Book Reviews

Cover Photo

Instructions for Authors

Featured Collections

IMPACT

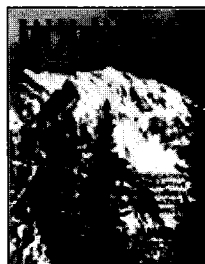
Proceedings

Podcasts

Connections Newsletter

HOME

Search AWRA



IMPACT
May 2009 Issue

Reviewer Guidance

Rigorous, thorough, and objective peer reviews play a critical role in advancing science. We are always looking for good reviewers!

Confidentiality of Reviews

To provide for a frank exchange of ideas among professionals, and to avoid any appearance of intimidation or coercion, some degree of confidentiality must be maintained in the review process. JAWRA policy is to not disclose the names of the reviewers of a particular article. The only exception would be in the event of a court order requiring disclosure. Reviewers are, however, free to disclose their own roles as reviewers. AWRA regularly publishes lists of reviewers, thanking them for their work, but does not associate the names with particular papers.

Draft manuscripts and reviews are considered confidential, and should not be distributed to those not involved in authoring or reviewing. Reviewers may discuss the manuscript with a colleague to clarify a point in question, but must do so in the context of confidentiality. Direct communications about the manuscript between reviewers and authors, or among reviewers, is discouraged. All review comments must be passed through the editorial process, so a record of how questions are resolved can be maintained.

Following publication of a paper, JAWRA retains a record of the review for a period of 90 days. The review record, though not the names of reviewers, may be released at the discretion of the Editor to settle questions about the accuracy or fairness of the review process.

Review Questions

Those reviewing a manuscript for JAWRA are asked to answer a series of questions listed below. Reviewers are not constrained by this list, but may include any comments they see fit. AWRA truly appreciates the work of our reviewers!

- **Originality.** Does this paper add to our existing body of knowledge? Does it, for example, demonstrate new methods, use robust or unique data, show a novel application, or develop a case study of a relevant issue?
- **Technical Quality.** Is the paper technically sound? Are assumptions reasonable and clearly stated? Do computations seem correct? Are conclusions properly supported by interpreted data?
- **Methods and Data.** Were appropriate techniques used in the study? Are methods explained adequately? Are there other methods that should be applied? Are all data sources clearly identified?
- **Title, Abstract, and Key Words.** Does the title characterize the paper in a way that will be useful for indexing? Does the abstract provide a concise and accurate summary of the work in a way potential readers can use it to decide if they want to read the entire work? Are the key words well chosen? Provide suggestions.
- **Organization and Readability.** Is it written for a multidisciplinary audience, and with a minimum of scientific jargon? [Note: Your charge is not to rewrite or copy edit a submission.] Are the ideas organized and presented in a logical sequence that contains the basic information, interpretation of that information, and results or conclusions of the interpretations?
- **Multidisciplinary.** Does the paper present ideas derived from multiple disciplines? Or, if based primarily upon a single discipline, does it have applications to other disciplines?
- **Literature Cited.** Does the discussion of earlier works document how this work adds to the body of knowledge? Are the relevant contributions of others cited?
- **Tables and Figures.** Are the figures and tables effective supplements to the text? Should any be reduced or deleted?
- **Equations.** If equations are used, are they clear and understandable? Should any be deleted?

How to make your review count.

We know your time is valuable. Here are some suggestions for making a bigger impact with your reviews.

1. Place your comments in context.

Good reviewers tell us **what** they think, and **why**. They give us confidence in their evaluations. Here is an example of why you should provide more information:

Literature Cited. Does the discussion of earlier works document how this work adds to the body of

Exhibit A



Choose a language to
translate this page!



Select to language

knowledge? Are the relevant contributions of others cited?

- Reviewer A: "Ok."
- Reviewer B: "Ok. The literature in this field is somewhat sparse, but I believe the authors have included the major references to establish their work."
- Reviewer C: "Providing only three references seems inadequate to me."

Reviewers A and B give the same bottom line, "Ok." But is Reviewer A really knowledgeable about the literature? We don't know from the comment. Reviewer B gives us a context to understand his or her evaluation. B's comment, moreover, helps us evaluate Reviewer C's, perhaps avoiding us sending the authors on a fruitless search for more citations.

2. Offer Solutions to Problems

If you find something wrong with a paper, give the authors an idea how they can satisfy your objection. Example:

- Reviewer A: "The presumed connection between nitrogen and phosphorus is unconvincing."
- Reviewer B: "The presumed connection between nitrogen and phosphorus needs to be demonstrated by establishing a correlation between samples."

Satisfying Reviewer A is open ended. In responding, the author may or may not provide sufficient evidence, perhaps necessitating a third round of reviews. Reviewer B has, more helpfully, specified what the author needs to do.

3. If You See Something, Say Something

Reviewers are our front line of defense against academic fraud. If you think you've seen a paper somewhere else, if the correlation seems too good to be true, or if you just sense something is wrong, let us know. We take all these warnings, even hunches, seriously. They are investigated discreetly but firmly. Reviewers' identities are held confidential.

4. Look at Ideas, not Grammar

English is not their first language for an increasing number of our authors. Please try to look beyond the grammar to see if ideas are clear and logic makes sense. The copy editors will fix the grammar. That said, if a paper is so badly translated you cannot make sense of it, do not waste your time reviewing it further; send it back to us and recommend rejection.

Blackwell Publications provides excellent copy editing before papers are published. Please resist the urge to copy edit! Doing so risks obscuring your more important technical comments.

5. Understand the Overall Recommendation

Reviewers sometimes differ widely in their overall evaluations. Here is a little more guidance:

- **Accept.** Recommending acceptance means you believe all technical issues are settled, and only minor points of explanation remain to be fixed. The author likely will be instructed to treat your final comments as suggestions, not requirements. You probably will not be asked to review the paper again.
- **Revisions Required.** This means you found a significant technical problem or an unconvincing explanation, and something needs to be fixed. The author will be required to address your comments and you will be asked to review the revised paper.
- **Reject.** If you feel there is no practical hope of repairing the paper, recommend rejection. Typically we allow authors 3 months to respond to comments; if you think fixing a problem will take longer, recommend rejecting the paper. Depending on what the other reviewers recommend, and how the author responds, you may be asked to review the revised paper.

Keep in mind the other reviewers may (and often do!) see things differently. The Editor and Associate Editors take all reviews into account and decide upon an appropriate course of action. In the rare event an author and reviewer cannot agree how to resolve an important difference, we send the paper to a third party to advise us on the point in question.